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PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

[ISSUED 25th FEB., 1864.]

SESSION 1863-64.

Third Meeting, 14th Dec., 1863.

LORD STRANGFORD, in the Chair.

ELECTIONS. — *Rev. John Bamforth; Thomas Bigg, Esq.; Donald Dalrymple, M.D.; Percy Matthew Hart, Esq.; Lord Gilbert Kennedy; M. Herman von Rönn; Charles Rowley, Esq.; Le Chevalier Giraldo dos Santos; James Duncan Thomson, Esq.; James F. Wingate, Esq.; John Randon Worcester, Esq.*

ACCESSIONS TO LIBRARY. — Among the Donations to the Library and Map-room since the 23rd November, 1863, were—‘Wanderings in West Africa by a F.R.G.S.’ ‘Captain Speke’s Discovery of the Source of the Nile.’ ‘Abeokuta and the Camaroons Mountain,’ by Capt. R. F. Burton, F.R.G.S. ‘Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula,’ by Professor H. Y. Hind, M.A., F.R.G.S. Continuations of Transactions of various Societies, &c. &c.

ACCESSIONS TO MAP-ROOM. — Continuation of Ordnance Maps and Admiralty Charts. Government Map of Bolivia, by Colonel J. Ondarza.

The first Paper read was entitled—

1. *Notes on the Island of Formosa.* By ROBERT SWINHOE, F.G.S. &c., H.M.’s Vice-Consul at Tai-Wan-Foo, on the island itself.

The island of Formosa is a *foo* or district of the Chinese province of Fokien, and is governed by a special Taou-Tai, who may memorialise the throne direct. Mr. Swinhoe doubts whether, owing to its bad anchorage and bad harbourage, Tai-Wan-Foo can ever become a centre of British trade, especially as there are known to be other and far more suitable ports. After marching overland to Tai-Wan-Foo, which is described as girt by a high battlemented wall,

six miles in extent, the Paper mentioned that the town was fast going to decay owing to the silting up of the river. The difficulty of navigating the coast of Formosa is great, and there are numerous wrecks of vessels that are compelled to run for a port, and are ignorant of several excellent harbours unsurveyed near the south end of the island. On the north-west coast is the Tam-suy River, which Mr. Swinhoe seems to think destined to become the British port of trade, there being 16 feet of water at high tide over the bar. The capital, Foo Chow, is not far distant, and there are several natural landmarks for facilitating navigation. The chief danger is from the freshets in the early summer, when the mountain-snows melt. The river in its upper course is formed by two chief branches, near one of which are sulphur mines. Among other improvements effected by native skill is their having, about 40 years since, diverted a large stream of water so as to make amends for the very bad water on the plains. There is a wooden aqueduct, 5 feet deep, 8 feet broad, and about 360 feet in length, which has been rendered water-tight with Chinese cement. Not far distant from this the territory of the aboriginal savages inhabiting the east coast is reached, where the division line is strongly marked by the Chinese side being denuded of trees, for the cultivation of the tea-plant, while the native side is covered with the usual forest vegetation. Great quantities of rain fall from November to May, making the climate comparatively cold, as is evidenced by a table drawn up with considerable care. This excess of moisture the author attributes to an oceanic stream known as the Kuroshio, which departs at the south cape of Formosa, and extends along its east side and past the eastern shore of Japan even to the Kurile islands, and is supposed to run for some distance alongside of a much warmer stream coming up from the Philippines. From the bold appearance of the eastern, northern, and north-western coast, the coast-line is assumed to be receding if anything. Excellent lignite coal is procured at Coal Harbour, on the north-east corner. There is fair sound tea on the island, besides rice, sugar, jute, grass-cloth fibre, rice paper, rattans, barley, wheat (superior to that of the mainland), camphor, petroleum, and dyewoods, and a constantly increasing import, chiefly opium.

The CHAIRMAN, in returning the thanks of the Society to the author of the Paper, said it was an exceedingly interesting and important contribution to our knowledge of a very curious and little known island. To nine-tenths of ordinary readers the name of Formosa would convey no more distinct idea than to recall the most successful typical forgery of modern times—George Psalmanazar's forgery of the Formosan language at the end of the last century. In reality it was a most beautiful and interesting island. The Paper touched upon the most important points connected with the island, and seemed to go with fair depth into them. There were three important points. The first was the geo-

graphical position and relations of the island; the imperfect way in which it had been surveyed hitherto, and the very small knowledge which we possessed with reference to the coasts, and the way in which that had acted practically upon our commerce. The second point was the Chinese colonisation (which did not appear to be an official colonisation, but an encroachment of the Chinese upon the aborigines), the relations of that colony with the central government, and its commercial prospects. The third point was the aboriginal race itself. Fortunately, each of these points could be illustrated by gentlemen present; by Sir Harry Parkes on the subject of the Chinese relations, and by Admiral Collinson, to whom we were indebted for the whole of our geographical knowledge of the coast at the present moment. He believed the Society would join him in echoing the opinion of Mr. Swinhoe, that the Hydrographic Office should take into immediate and serious consideration the unsurveyed state of the coast of Formosa, and especially the fact that when an appeal was made to the Admiral in command at Hongkong, he expressed his inability to grant assistance. He thought some suggestion might advantageously be brought to bear upon the Admiralty, for no doubt Mr. Swinhoe was perfectly right in saying that the present state of our knowledge on the subject was detrimental to British commerce.

Admiral COLLINSON said he looked upon Formosa in some measure as a child of his own. In the course of his survey of the Pescadores he occasionally caught glimpses of the far-off island, and availed himself of the opportunity to fix the position of the principal mountains, to the highest of which—above 10,000 feet high—he gave the name of Mount Morrison; a name which he believed all those who were acquainted with our original connection with the Chinese would acknowledge ought to be perpetuated throughout all ages. After his survey of the Pescadores, on his return to Hongkong, Sir Thomas Cochrane desired him to go up the east side of Formosa. It was a *terra incognita*. He went round in a little brig, which he commanded, and coasted along in search of a harbour; but no harbour could be found until he came to Blackrock Bay. Up to a certain point they saw Chinese boats; but above that point they did not see a single boat afloat. They came upon a beautiful and highly-cultivated terrace-ground of high hills, which rose almost immediately from the beach, and which were very confined and narrow. In Blackrock Bay, which was merely a basaltic protuberance from the coast, when he was making his observations, one of his assistant surveyors went on shore to take up a position to make a survey of the place. In the course of his walk along the beach, two of the natives came out and visited him; and those were the only two they got into communication with during the whole of their visit. They appeared to be more of the Malay than of the Chinese race. The Chinese whom they met with afterwards in the upper part of the island reported that they were cannibals, and lived in trees,—in short, gave them the worst possible character. He found that Mr. Swinhoe gave them a very different character; and he must say, so far as he could judge from the nice appearance of the houses and the cultivated lands, that he should have very much liked to have got into communication with them. With reference to the probability of our entering into commercial relations with the people on the east side, he was inclined to think that there was no opening for British commerce there. The coast-line was nearly straight; there were no indentations, and the boulders on the shore were so large, that they gave some idea of the immense force of the ocean-current which carried them there. The only place where they attempted to land afterwards was Chekodai Bay. There was a large river there, and they took boats and tried to get in, but found it impossible. They then went up to Sau-o Bay, and they found the Chinese had come round the end of the island, and were in full possession; but over the remaining portions of the island, the

Chinese had no rule whatever. Generally speaking, Formosa might be said to be half the size of Ireland; and from the papers that were given to him, he judged that the dialect was undoubtedly Malayan. The great equatorial current set in on the island in a more wonderful manner than it did in any part of the Atlantic. Off Steep Island, he was carried away one day 91 miles against the wind by the current, and on the following day 103 miles against the wind. The whole force of the motion of water given by the equatorial movement through the Pacific Ocean reached the island of Manilla; it then flowed up along the island of Formosa, and from thence on to the coast of Japan; but its greatest strength was felt at Formosa and Japan. He had no hesitation in saying that the current would be found to run at the rate of $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 miles an hour.

With respect to coal he might state, that finding no anchoring place but the little Sau-o Bay, they went round to Kelung Bay, and in pulling up the river they met with junks laden with coal. It was not known before that coal had been found in this part of the world. He was called to make an examination of it, and he went to the mines, which were about a mile and a quarter from the beach, and found them in a very primitive condition, worked simply by adits. They had no means of lifting, and the only seams which could be worked were those which could be worked from the surface. Whether a seam would be found by sinking was the province of the geologist rather than the nautical surveyor. He added that the island itself, at least the Chinese part of it, produced everything that was required in the shape of fruits and supplies, and that it might be called the granary of the Fokien provinces. The trade from Tai-Wan to Amoy and Loochoo Fu was very great indeed in rice, camphor, wood, and vegetables. The operations in the Gulf of Pecheli, and the opening of Japan to the commerce of the world, have interfered with the survey of Formosa, which was begun by him; but now that attention has been called to the island by the interesting paper by Mr. Swinhoe, it is to be hoped that some steps will be taken to complete the survey of its shores.

SIR HARRY PARKES said he was afraid he should scarcely be able to speak upon all the points suggested by the Chairman, for it was rather a complicated and little known subject. Mr. Swinhoe had rendered good service in drawing attention to an island of immense extent, which was probably as much a *terra incognita* as any other unexplored part of the continent of Asia. It was less a *terra incognita* to Europeans some time ago than it was in the present day, for two centuries ago it was claimed as a European possession. The Dutch occupied it from 1622 to 1662. At that time, wishing to share with the Portuguese and the Spaniards in the trade of the East, they took possession of the Pescadores Islands as a check to Macao on one side, then held by the Portuguese, and on the other to the Philippine Islands, which belonged to the Spaniards. At the instance of the Chinese they relinquished the Pescadores Islands and established themselves on the island of Formosa, which up to that time had not been formally claimed by the Chinese, although separated from them by a channel only ninety-five miles in width. They themselves suggested that the Dutch should take possession of the island. At that time another power which had lately come into notice, the Japanese, were also located there; and whenever the Chinese and Japanese came in contact in those days, the Chinese went to the wall.

The Japanese followed a very different policy then from that which they pursued now. They were then the adventurers of the East, and they supplied mercenary troops to many Asiatic nations. They had flourishing colonies in the island of Formosa in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and perhaps it was with the politic intention of setting one race against the other that the Chinese suggested to the Dutch to go there too. However, when the Dutch went there, they found not only the Japanese but also the Spaniards, and they

had to expel both before they became masters of the island. Masters of the island they scarcely continued to be: for, in consequence of the great civil troubles which set in throughout the whole of China in the middle of that century, swarms of Chinese flocked over into Formosa, against whom the Dutch were scarcely able to contend; until at last the famous piratical chief, Koxinga, who had been strong enough at one time to contend with the Tartars for the empire of the South, was driven from the country, and, crossing over to Formosa, he in turn expelled the Dutch from that island. Following the usual course of events, the pirate himself was eventually subjected to the Chinese Government; and, as late as 1682, the Chinese for the first time claimed jurisdiction over Formosa and incorporated it with their territories. It was now called a *Foo*, a territorial division of which there are no less than 260 in the whole of China. From that time Formosa ceased to be of much importance to the European; and even after our first treaty, though the coasts of China became accessible to us, yet notwithstanding the attractive name that it bears, Formosa was dreaded by sailors and navigators in consequence of the difficulties to which Admiral Collinson had alluded, and which rendered it a serious obstacle to the navigation of the coast of China. The South Cape was about the very worst point for a vessel to get on shore; for on that extreme point of the island there was a particular aboriginal tribe, numbering 200 or 300 individuals, who had an unfortunate passion for human heads, and it was a habit with them to murder any foreigner that came in their way. He had occasion to make the acquaintance of these people about twelve years ago, when one of our vessels was lost on that point, and he was sent over by Her Majesty's Government to make some inquiries respecting the missing crew. They succeeded in rescuing two of the men, who were in the hands of another tribe on the western point, the wreck having taken place on the eastern point of the said Cape. These two men had been bought by the Chinese at 6 dollars a head, and had been in captivity with them six months. The north point of the island had also proved as dangerous to us as the South Cape. Two English vessels, the *Nerbuddah* and the *Ann*, were both wrecked there, in consequence of the strong oceanic currents which prevailed on the coast. That was in the year 1842; and although the crews of those two vessels did not fall into the hands of savages, but into the hands of the Chinese proper, they were treated in no better way; for, out of a crew of 240 on board the *Nerbuddah* 2 only remained with their lives, and out of 57 which formed the crew of the *Ann*, 10 only remained; the others having been taken to the capital of Formosa, and, after being kept in captivity there, murdered in cold blood. This was the character which Formosa bore to us: wrecks in the north and south, judicial murders on the part of the Chinese, and bloody murders made by the aboriginal tribes. We had now turned over a new page in the history of our communications with Formosa. The opening of the island to British commerce was one of the last acts which that great British nobleman (Lord Elgin), whose loss we had now to deplore, had accomplished by the treaty which he made with the Chinese.

As to Formosa being a colony, certainly in one sense it was a colony of China, though a very great portion of it still belonged to the aboriginal tribes; and it was worthy of notice that in this land were found impinging upon each other the remnants of very distinct races of men. To take the three little islands of Lambay Botel, Tobago, and Samasima, all situated in the vicinity of South Cape, the first was inhabited by the Chinese, the second by the Malay, and the last by Japanese. In other parts of the island it was difficult to say by what race it was possessed: some of the tribes were believed to be of Malay origin, and some of Polynesian; while still further north Mr. Swinhoe would say that the natives belonged to the aboriginal races of China. The island was very interesting in an ethnological point of view, because we had those distinct traces of different races of people; and, bearing this circumstance in mind, he

was not surprised that Admiral Collinson did not find in the pictures of the aborigines presented to the meeting any very strong resemblance to his friends in Blackrock Bay, certainly, those he saw were not so good-looking or so attractive as those represented in the pictures who probably came from the northern part of the island. At present the island presented two different aspects, the western and the eastern one: the western one prosperous and commercial, the eastern one wild and still occupied by savage races; where, as Admiral Collinson stated, no native craft were to be seen, while the narrow channel which separated the island from China on its western side was always crowded with junks. A further change, however, had taken place in later years; junks were passing out of date, and now most of the local trade was carried on in foreign bottoms. There was a large trade at Tam-Suy, and there was also a trade at Ta-kow. Lord Elgin's treaty in throwing Formosa open for trade did not specify for any particular port. He stipulated that Taiwan, which is the name for the whole island, should be thrown open to commerce, and it was afterwards for our consuls to find out which spot was the best suited for commerce. Mr. Swinhoe was perfectly right in considering Taiwan as unsuitable. He had visited that place himself, and he could confirm what Mr. Swinhoe said, that it is unapproachable to vessels drawing any depth of water; and the event had proved that Ta-kow in the south, and Tam-Suy in the north, were ports at which considerable commerce could be carried on. Although the Chinese might argue we were not entitled to more than one port, they had been so liberal as to allow trade at both these ports since the treaty came into operation. From the large immigration from China, he had no doubt that we should see the aboriginal tribes dwindle down, and perhaps at no distant date become altogether extinct; and it might be expected, that in proportion as they gradually disappeared, so commerce would increase. The foreign trade at present bore a local character, that is, cargoes were not sent direct from England to Formosa, nor from Formosa direct to England, but were exchanged between the island and the coast of China and Hong-Kong. The trade was already of sufficient importance to employ a considerable amount of foreign tonnage for steamers, and would probably speedily realize all the expectations formed of it.

The CHAIRMAN said that the only point he would advert to was with reference to the aboriginal tribes. The knowledge they possessed of these people as regarded their languages and dialects was entirely derived from the original Dutch settlers. Their occupation of the land was from 1620 to 1660. They were acquainted with two slightly differing dialects, and a discovery made twenty years ago had put us in possession of a Dutch grammar and a Dutch dictionary of another Formosan speech: this last differing almost entirely from all those that we had known of before. The earlier specimens were the subject of a treatise in Klaproth's works. The whole of the languages had also been made the subject of a very able treatise by a distinguished German philologist, Dr. Gabelentz, who possessed a special knowledge of the Malayan and Polynesian dialects. He had compared those dialects together, and the result was that they possessed a general, but not a special, affinity with the Malayan or the Polynesian, rather than with the extreme type of the Oceanic race, which is usually considered of a different descent altogether. These Formosan dialects differed considerably between themselves, and amounted almost to two separate languages having general affinities. This was the only point to which he wished to call attention. He thought the physiological evidence ought to go hand in hand with the philological evidence, in order properly to determine the question of race.
